

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 14 NOVEMBER 2019
title: TOURISM PERFORMANCE STATISTICS 2018 AND ACTIVITY 2019/20
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To receive the latest tourism performance statistics and a general progress report on tourism activity.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
 - Corporate Priorities - To encourage economic development throughout the borough, with specific focus on tourism
 - Other Considerations – To develop, with relevant partners, measures to support the visitor economy

2 TOURISM PERFORMANCE FIGURES

- 2.1 Each year, the Council participates in a county-wide study to measure the performance of tourism and the visitor economy. The cost of this study is contained within this Council's annual subvention to Marketing Lancashire of £5,000.
- 2.2 The model used is called STEAM, and is applied at both county and district level, resulting in year-on-year performance measurements for employment, bed-spaces, economic growth, and visitor numbers, for both staying and day visitors. It also measures bed-spaces and direct employment.
- 2.3 Whilst tourism itself is difficult to measure, not least given the challenge of defining what is included and, moreover, what defines a tourist, the STEAM model is widely applied by local authorities, and considered to be one of the most reliable models, at least in mapping year-on-year trends.
- 2.4 The attached appendix illustrates very favourable results for Ribble Valley, especially in terms of economic growth between 2017 and 2018. The results are always measured one year in arrears. The figures show growth in the economic impact of tourism in Ribble Valley at 7.3 %, significantly higher than the Lancashire average of 3.8%.
- 2.5 The number of visitors to the borough has topped four million, an increase of 7.6%, compared to an overall Lancashire increase of 1.7%
- 2.6 The borough attracted 4.04million day-trippers last year, around 300,000 more than 2017 – an eight per cent increase, compared to two per cent across Lancashire.

The combined visitor economy – comprising day and staying visitors – generated nearly £270million in expenditure, and 3,454 full-time equivalent jobs, a six per cent increase on 2017.

- 2.7 The only decreases in the figures, are those of accommodation stock, and, subsequently, staying visitors, but this may be attributed to a more robust calculation of bed-spaces in the Borough, which had been previously included premises just over the border, plus some duplication in the holiday home park sector.
- 2.8 The figures do not include the ‘sharing economy’ e.g. Airbnb, which is believed to be growing in this area.
- 2.9 A press release on this success has already been issued.

3 OTHER TOURISM ACTIVITIES

3.1 Working in Partnership

- The Council has a subvention agreement with Marketing Lancashire, which is County wide body which seeks to promote the County both nationally and internationally. The subvention for 2019/20 is currently under review after the council withheld part of the payment for 2018/19.
- The Ribble Valley Tourism Association continues to flourish and has held a number of members meetings. The association also recently agreed to invite the Council to nominate a representative to its executive committee, and this will be considered in due course.

3.2 The Ribble Valley Wedding Partnership

- This pioneering tourism programme recently celebrated its fifth anniversary. The partnership, comprising licenced wedding venues in Ribble Valley, is believed to be unique in the UK, where venues work together, with the local authority, to develop a brand, based on the reputation as ‘the perfect place to be married’. The Ribble Valley Wedding Heaven Partnership has in its membership, the majority of licenced venues in the area, together with numerous supplier members.
- The success of the group may be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the strong brand identity of Ribble Valley, a place with great landscapes and a reputation for quality. Next, a local authority committed to partnership working. Then, the group has recognised that, by working together, any wedding in Ribble Valley may potentially benefit any partner, whether that be through dining experiences or overspill accommodation, and that working collaboratively has great potential. Finally, each wedding venue in the partnership is different; therefore, the options available to customers are very wide, from castles to abbeys, country house hotels to barns. Whilst each is unique, they share values of quality and outstanding customer service.
- In addition to its promotional activities, including website brochures and social media activity, the group has been meeting with Lancashire County Council’s registry officers, which has resulted in major changes to the way in which wedding bookings are made by couples, along with changes to the way outdoor weddings are approved.

- Furthermore, the work of the partnership has been recognised at a national level, with the Council's Tourism Officer being invited to participate a small team of experts providing advice to the Law Commission, which will be making recommendations the Government on a review of wedding law.
- As well as providing a 'Ribble Valley Wedding Heaven website, the partnership produces a high-quality publication, which is particularly popular with potential customers, as it offers a one-stop-shop for Ribble Valley venues. It is about to be reprinted to reflect recent changes to membership.
- Weddings are a powerful tool in stimulating tourism, as they not only provide a significant number of first-time visitors to stay in the area, but evidence also suggests that many such visits are converting to repeat visits. Having enjoyed their time, experiencing the fantastic hospitality, great countryside and amazing dining experiences, wedding guests are returning for independent holidays.

3.3. Promoting Careers in Tourism and Hospitality

- For many, working in the tourism and hospitality sector can bring a fulfilling and successful career path, whilst for others it can provide the opportunity to acquire valuable life skills for other occupations. Given its importance to the local economy, we are keen to raise the profile of working in the tourism and hospitality sector, and we continually work with Springboard, a national organisation, to promote work in the industry. We are keen to improve the image of the sector, and to work more closely with young people studying at local schools and colleges, to help them launch their career in this sector. We are also keen to raise the profile of specific skilled roles and occupations.
- In the first instance we are promoting three programmes locally –
 - GEMS: a mentoring scheme to support young people who aspire to work in the industry.
 - Future Chef - Ribble Valley: Given the importance of food tourism in Ribble Valley we have chosen to highlight the valuable role that Chefs provide in the locality, and to support Springboard's Future Chef Competition
 - Springboard Ambassador: In order to highlight the importance of the Tourism and Hospitality sector, we are trying to identify champions to promote the industry. We are, therefore, supporting the Springboard Ambassador Programme.

3.4 Visitor Guide 2020

- The 2020 Love Ribble Valley Visitor Guide, which will be available printed, online and as a download, is currently being produced. The Guide will be in a full colour quality format, which very much reflects the quality of Ribble Valley. It will be distributed nationwide to targeted tourist information centres and sent out direct mail on request. It is also distributed locally, as well as at numerous promotional events, and many local accommodation providers now use it as a bedroom browser.

- Work on the Guide is largely delivered inhouse, including advertising sales and writing editorials. The contract for design and print was won by Burnley Borough Council's 'Creative Council' team. We are part way through production, sales are going well, and it is anticipated that production will meet the deadline of printing at Christmas, and delivery in the new year.
- The photographic content has improved greatly over recent years and, once again, will include the work of many local photographers who took part in a competition, in addition to some professionally commissioned work.

3.5 Promoting in Partnership

Each year, Ribble Valley is promoted at a number of key events and, wherever possible, the Council works with businesses keen to support our promotional activities. Such involvement may come in the form of practical help, such as loan of equipment and, in some cases, shared investment, but we are always particularly keen to have the involvement of staff from local businesses, whose product knowledge is always invaluable when dealing with customers visiting our stand. Here are the events attended: -

- Great Harwood Show - May
- Ribble Valley Wedding Show at Stonyhurst - June
- Myerscough College Country Fair - June
- Longridge and Goosnargh Show - July
- Garstang Show - August
- Clitheroe Food Festival - August
- Lancashire Game and Country Festival - September
- Group Leisure and Travel Show - October (with Fylde/West Lancashire Councils)
- Ribble Valley Wedding Fair - October 2019

And still to come this financial year –

- The Times Destinations Holiday Show 16th–19th January 2020

3.6 Walks with Taste

Walks with Taste is a series of walks through some of the area's most spectacular countryside, taking in some of its best inns and hostelries. The walks were initially developed in partnership with seven local businesses, namely: the Assheton Arms, Downham; Aspinall Arms, Mitton; Foxfields Country Hotel, Billington; Higher Trapp Hotel, Simonstone; Holmes Mill, Clitheroe; Spread Eagle, Sawley; and Waddington Arms. There are three new walks about to be launched: Calf's Head, Worston; the Inn at Whitewell; the Shireburn Arms, Hurst Green; with four more anticipated in the months to come.

The walks feature self-guided routes with maps and descriptions, and are different in distance, duration and terrain, ensuring there is something for all tastes and abilities.

- Walking is a great way to keep fit and work up a healthy appetite, and visitors to the area frequently enquire about the best walks and food. Walks with Taste have other benefits, too. By using the car parks of featured hostelries as a starting point, parking congestion in country lanes is minimised, and businesses along the walks are also showcased.

- The walks have been co-funded with each participating venue, and walking footwear specialist, Whalley Warm and Dry, which sponsored the folders. Individual walks are available from participating businesses, and whole sets are available from the Platform Gallery and Visitor Information Centre in Clitheroe, Whalley Warm and Dry, or may be downloaded from visitribblevalley.co.uk.

3.7 **Media activity**

There has been steady national, regional, and local media coverage, and we have hosted TV, national press, and an award-winning blogger.

3.8 **Destination Management Plan**

The Council's tourism and promotional activity is guided by a destination management plan, which identifies the key target areas and opportunities. It is due to be refreshed and will be reported back to this committee

4 **ISSUES**

The main issue to note is the significant growth in the Ribble Valley visitor economy, amongst the best performing across Lancashire in terms of economic growth and believed to be top in terms of growth in visitor numbers. The success of the wedding partnership is also noteworthy, with the group's work now influencing county wide policies, as well as being invited to be part of a government wedding consultative group.

5 **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The approval of this report may have the following implications;

- Resources – The cost of the STEAM report is contained within the annual subvention made to Marketing Lancashire and all marketing activity is contained within existing budgets and, where opportunities arise, matched by other public and private sector support
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None in the context of this report
- Reputation – The Council is an active contributor in terms of strategic and operational tourism service.
- Equality and Diversity – None

6 **CONCLUSION**

Further progress will be reported to future committees, including the submission of refreshed Destination Management Plan.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS None

For further information, please contact Tom Pridmore 01200 414496

RIBBLE VALLEY'S VISITOR ECONOMY 2018

4.40 million

Tourism Visits, equating to 6% of all tourism visits to Lancashire

359,000 visits were made by visitors **staying in the Ribble Valley** as part of a holiday or short break, generating **1.371 million nights** in accommodation across the county

4.044 million tourism visits made by **Day Visitors** to the district



Total bedstock in the Ribble Valley is 7,355 beds

Comprising 5,452 non-serviced and 1,903 serviced beds



A total of **£260.777 million** was generated within the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure

Day Visits generated **£145.595 million** for the local economy of Ribble Valley in 2018

In total, **staying visitors** generate a **total economic impact of £115.182 million** for the businesses and communities of the Ribble Valley



Visitors to the Ribble Valley support **3,454 full time equivalent jobs**



More than **5 million Visitor Days and Nights** generated by visitors in 2018



Economic Impact rose by 7.3% between 2017 and 2018

Visitor Numbers increased by 7.6% between 2017 and 2018

RIBBLE VALLEY'S VISITOR ECONOMY 2018

	2018	2017	YOY Variance
Total Visitor Numbers (000s)	4,403	4,094	+7.6%
Day Visitors (000's)	4,044	3,728	+8.5%
Staying Visitors (000's)	359	365	-1.7%
Total Visitors Days (000's)	5,415	5,183	+4.5%
Visitor Days – staying visitors (000's)	1,371	1,455	-5.7%
Total Economic Impact (£000's)	260,777	243,031	+7.3%
Economic Impact day visitors (£000's)	145,595	129,188	+12.7%
Economic Impact staying visitors (£000's)	115,182	113,842	+1.2%
FTE Jobs supported	3,454	3,262	+5.9%
Accommodation Stock	7,355	7,709	-4.6%
Serviced Accommodation Stock	1,903	1,804	+5.5%
Non-serviced accommodation stock	5,452	5,905	-7.7%